1886

See Scarcity of Coin —

A

LETTER

FROM THE

Revd. J. S. D. S. P. D.

K. North (A.) Presid.

TO A

Country Gentleman

IN THE

North of IRELAND.

Printed in the Year, MDCCXXXVI.

A

LETTER, &c.

SIR,

I Am a Country Gentleman, and a Member of *Parliament*, with an Eſtate of about 1400 *l.* a Year; which, as a *Northeren* Landlord, I receive from above two Hundred Tenants: And my Lands having been let near twenty Years ago, the Rents, until very lately, were eſteemed not to be above half Value; yet by the intolerable Scarcity of *Silver*, I lie under the greateſt Difficulties in receiving them; as well as in paying my Labourers; or buying any Thing neceſſary for my Family from *Tradeſmen*, who are not able to be long out of their *Money*. But the Sufferings of me and thoſe of my Rank, are Trifles in Compariſon of what the meaner Sort undergo; ſuch as the *Buyers* and *Sellers*, at *Fairs* and *Markets*; the *Shopkeepers* in every *Town*; the *Farmers* in general; all thoſe who travel with *Fiſh*, *Poultry*, *Pedlary-ware*; and other Conveniences to ſell: But more eſpecially *Handicraftſmen*, who work for us by the Day; and common Labourers whom I have already mentioned. Both theſe Kind of People I am forced to employ until their Wages amount to a *Double Piſtole*, or a *Moidore*, (for we hardly have any *Gold* of lower Value left us) to divide it among themſelves as they can: And this is generally done at an *Ale-houſe* or *Brandy-ſhop*; where, beſides the Coſt of getting *drunk*, (which is uſually the Caſe) they muſt pay *Ten Pence* or a *Shilling*, for changing their *Piece* into *Silver*, to ſome *Huckſtering Fellow*, who follows that *Trade*. But, what is infinitely worſe, thoſe poor Men for want of due Payment, are forced to take up their *Oat-meal*, and other Neceſſaries of Life, at almoſt double Value; and, conſequently, are not able to diſcharge half their Score; eſpecially under the Scarceneſs of *Corn*, for two Years paſt; and the melancholy Diſappointment of the preſent *Crop*.

The Cauſes of this, and a Thouſand other Evils, are clear and manifeſt to you, and all thinking Men; although hidden

hidden from the Vulgar: Theſe indeed complain of hard Times, the Death of Corn, the Want of Money, the Badneſs of Seaſons; that their Goods bear no Price, and the Poor cannot find work; but their weak Reaſonings never carry them to the Hatred and Contempt born us by our Neighbours and Brethren, without the leaſt Grounds of Provocation; who rejoice at our Sufferings, although ſometimes to their own Diſadvantage. They conſider not the dead Weight upon every beneficial Branch of our Trade; that half our Revenues are annually ſent to *England*; with many other Grievances peculiar to this unhappy Kingdom; which keep us from enjoying the common Benefits of Mankind; as you and ſome other Lovers of their Country have ſo often obſerved, with ſuch good Inclinations, and ſo little Effect.

It is true indeed, that under our Circumſtances in general; this Complaint for the Want of *Silver*, may appear as ridiculous, as for a Man to be impatient about a *Cut-Finger*, when he is ſtruck with the *Plague*: And yet a poor Fellow going to the *Gallows*, may be allowed to feel the Smart of *Waſps* while he is upon *Tyburn-Road*. This Misfortune is ſo urging, and vexatious in every Kind of ſmall Traffick; and ſo hourly preſſing upon all Perſons in the Country whatſoever; that a Hundred Inconveniencies, of perhaps greater Moment in themſelves, have been tamely ſubmitted to, with far leſs diſquietude and Murmurs. And the Caſe ſeems yet the harder, if it be true, what many skilful Men aſſert, that nothing is more eaſy than a Remedy: and, that the Want of *Silver*, in Proportion to the little *Gold* remaining among us, is altogether as unneceſſary, as it is inconvenient. A Perſon of Diſtinction aſſured me very lately, that, in diſcourſing with the * *Lord Lieutenant*, before his laſt Return to *England*; his *Excellency* ſaid, *He had preſſed the Matter often, in proper Time and place, and to proper perſons; and could not ſee any Difficulty of the leaſt Moment, that could prevent us from being made eaſy upon this Article.*

Whoever carries to *England* twenty ſeven *Engliſh* Shillings, and brings back one *Moidore* of full Weight, is a Gainer of Nine Pence *Iriſh*: In a *Guinea*, the Advantage is Three Pence; and Two pence in a *piſtole*. The BANKERS, who are generally Maſters of all our *Gold* and *Silver*

* Lord *Carteret*.

ver, with this Advantage, have ſent over as much of the latter, as came into their Hands. The Value of One Thouſand *Moidores* in *Silver*, would thus amount in clear Profit, to 37 *l.* 10 *s.* The *Shopkeepers*, and other *traders* who go to *London* to buy Goods, followed the ſame Practice; by which we have been driven into this inſupportable Diſtreſs.

To a common Thinker, it ſhould ſeem, that nothing would be more eaſy, than for the *Government* to redreſs this Evil, at any Time they ſhall pleaſe. When the Value of *Guineas* was lowered in *England* from 21 *s.* and 6 *d.* to only 21 *s.* the Conſequences to this Kingdom were obvious, and manifeſt to us all: And a ſober Man may be allowed at leaſt to wonder, although he dare not complain, why a new Regulation of *Coin* among us, was not then made; much more, why it hath never been ſince. It would ſurely require no very profound Skill in *Algebra*, to reduce the Difference of *Nine Pence in Thirty Shillings*; or *Three Pence* in a *Guinea* to leſs than a *Farthing*; and ſo ſmall a Fraction could be no Temptation, either to *Bankers* to hazard their *Silver* at Sea, or Tradeſmen to load themſelves with it, in their Journies to *England*. In my humble Opinion it would be no unſeaſonable Condeſcention, if the *Government* would graciouſly pleaſe to ſignify to the *poor loyal Proteſtant Subjects* of *Ireland*, either that this miſerable Want of *Silver*, is not poſſible to be remedied in any Degree, by the niceſt Skill in *Arithmetick*; or elſe, that it doth not ſtand with the good Pleaſure of *England*, to ſuffer any *Silver* at all among us. In the former Caſe, it would be Madneſs to expect Impoſſibilities; and in the other, we muſt ſubmit: For, Lives and Fortunes are always at the Mercy of the CONQUEROR.

The Queſtion hath been often put in *printed papers*, by the DRAPIER and others, or, perhaps, by the ſame WRITER, under different Styles; why this Kingdom ſhould not be permitted to have a *Mint* of its own, for the Coinage of *Gold*, *Silver*, and *Copper*; which is a Power exerciſed by many *Biſhops*, and every petty Prince in *Germany*? But this Queſtion hath never been anſwered; nor the leaſt Application, that I have heard of, made to the *Crown* from hence, for the Grant of a *Publick Mint*; although it ſtands upon Record, that ſeveral Cities and Corporations here, had

had the Liberty of *Coining Silver*. I can ſee no Reaſons, why we alone of all Nations, are thus reſtrained; but ſuch as I dare not mention: Only thus far, I may venture; that *Ireland* is the firſt Imperial Kingdom, ſince *Nimrod*, which ever wanted Power, to *Coin* their own *Money*.

I know very well, that in *England*, it is lawful for any Subject to petition either the *Prince* or the *Parliament*, provided it be done in a dutiful and regular Manner: But what is lawful for a Subject of *Ireland*, I profeſs I cannot determine: Nor will undertake, that your *Printer* ſhall not be proſecuted, in a *Court of Juſtice*, for publiſhing my *Wiſhes*, that a poor Shopkeeper might be able to change a *Guinea*, or a *Moidore*, when a cuſtomer comes for a *Crown*'s Worth of Goods. I have known leſs Crimes puniſhed with the utmoſt Severity, under the Title of *Diſaffection*. And I cannot but approve the Wiſdom of the *Ancients*, who, after *Aſtrea* had fled from the Earth, at leaſt took Care to provide *three upright Judges for Hell*. Mens Ears, among us, are indeed grown ſo nice, that whoever happens to think out of Faſhion, in what relates to the Welfare of this Kingdom, dare not ſo much as complain of the *Tooth-ach*; leſt our weak and buſy Dablers in Politicks, ſhould be ready to ſwear againſt him for *Diſaffection*.

There was a Method practiſed by Sir *Ambroſe Crawley*, the great Dealer in *Iron-works*; which I wonder the Gentlemen of our Country, under this great Exigence, have not thought fit to imitate. In the ſeveral Towns and Villages where he dealt, and many Miles round; he gave *Notes* inſtead of *Money*, from *two Pence* to *twenty Shillings*; which paſſed current in all Shops and Markets, as well as in Houſes, where Meat or Drink was ſold. I ſee no Reaſon, why the like Practice may not be introduced among us, with ſome Degree of Succeſs; or at leaſt may not ſerve as a poor Expedient, in this our *bleſſed Age of Paper*; which, as it diſchargeth all our greateſt Payments, may be equally uſeful in the ſmaller; and may juſt keep us alive, until an *Engliſh Act of Parliament ſhall forbid it*.

I have been told, that among ſome of our pooreſt *American* Colonies, upon the Continent, the People enjoy the Liberty of cutting the little *Money* among them into Halves

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and Quarters, for the Conveniences of ſmall Traffick. How happy ſhould we be in Compariſon of our preſent Condition, if the like Privilege were granted to us, of employing the Sheers, for want of a *Mint*, upon our *foreign Gold*; by clipping it into *Half-Crowns*, and *Shillings*, and even lower Denominations; for Beggars muſt be content, to live upon Scraps; and it would be our Felicity, that theſe Scraps could never be exported to other Countries while any Thing better was left.

If neither of theſe Projects will avail, I ſee nothing left us, but to truck and barter our Goods, like the *wild Indians* with each other; or with our too powerful Neighbours; only with this Diſadvantage on our Side, that the *Indians* enjoy the Product of their own Land; whereas the better half of ours is ſent away, without ſo much as a Recompence in *Bugles* or *Glaſs* in return.

It muſt needs be a very comfortable Circumſtance, in the preſent Juncture, that ſome Thouſand Families are gone, or going, or preparing to go from hence, and ſettle themſelves in *America*. The poorer Sort, for want of Work; the Farmers whoſe beneficial Bargains are now become a Rack-Rent too hard to be born. And thoſe who have any *ready Money*, or can purchaſe any, by the Sale of their Goods or Leaſes; becauſe they find their Fortunes hourly decaying, that their Goods will bear no Price, and that few or none have any *Money* to buy the very Neceſſaries of Life, are haſtning to follow their departed Neighbours. It is true, *Corn* among us carries a very high Price; but it is for the ſame Reaſon, that *Rats*, and *Cats*, and dead *Horſes*, have been often bought for *Gold* in a Town beſieged.

There is a Perſon of Quality in my Neighbourhood, who twenty Years ago, when he was juſt come to Age, being unexperienced, and of a generous temper, let his Lands, even as Times went then, at a low Rate to able Tenants; and conſequently by the Riſe of Land ſince that time, looked upon his Eſtate to be ſet at half Value: But Numbers of theſe Tenants, or their Deſcendants, are now offering to ſell their Leaſes by Cant, even thoſe which were for Lives, ſome of them renewable for ever, and ſome Fee-Farms, which the Landlord himſelf hath bought in at half the Price they would have yielded ſeven Years ago. And ſome Leaſes

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let at the ſame Time for Lives, have been given up to him, without any Conſideration at all.

This is the moſt favourable Face of Things at preſent among us; I ſay, among us of the *North*, who are eſteemed the only thriving People of the Kingdom. And how far, and how ſoon this Miſery and Deſolation may ſpread, is eaſy to foreſee.

The vaſt Sums of *Money* daily carried off, by our numerous Advententures to *America*, have deprived us of our *Gold* in theſe Parts, almoſt as much as of our *Silver*.

And the good Wives who come to our Houſes, offer us their Pieces of Linnen, upon which their whole Dependence lies, for ſo little Profit, that it can neither half pay their Rents, nor half ſupport their Families.

It is remarkable, that this Enthuſiaſm ſpread among our *Northern* People, of ſheltring themſelves in the Continent of *America*, hath no other Foundation, than their preſent inſupportable Condition at home. I have made all poſſible Enquiries, to learn what Encouragement our People have met with, by any Intelligence from thoſe Plantations, ſufficient to make them undertake ſo tedious and hazardous a Voyage in all Seaſons of the Year; and ſo ill accommodated in their Ships, that many of them have died miſerably in their Paſſage; but could never get one ſatisfactory Anſwer. Some body, they know not who, had written a Letter to his Friend or Couſin from thence, inviting him by all Means, to come over; that it was a fine fruitful Country, and to be held for ever at a *Penny* an Acre. But the Truth of the Fact is this: The *Engliſh* eſtabliſhed in thoſe Colonies, are in great want of Men to inhabit that Tract of Ground, which lies between them and the *wild Indians*, who are not reduced under their Dominion. We read of ſome barbarous People, whom the *Romans* placed in their Armies, for no other Service than to blunt their Enemies Swords, and afterwards to fill up Trenches with their dead Bodies. And thus our People, who tranſport themſelves, are ſettled in thoſe interjacent Tracts, as a Screen againſt the Inſults of the *Savages*; and may have as much Land as they can clear from the Woods at a very reaſonable Rate, if they can afford to pay about a *Hundred* Years Purchaſe, by their Labour. Now, beſides the *Fox*'s Reaſons, which inclines all thoſe who have already ventured thither, to re-

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preſent every Thing in a falſe Light, as well for juſtifying their own Conduct, as for getting Companions in their Miſery: The governing People in thoſe Plantations, have alſo wiſely provided, that no Letters ſhall be ſuffered to paſs from thence hither, without being firſt viewed by the Council; by which, our people here are wholly deceived, in the Opinions they have of the happy Condition of their Friends gone before them. This was accidentally diſcovered ſome Months ago, by an honeſt Man; who having tranſported himſelf and Family thither, and finding all Things directly contrary to his Hope, had the luck to convey a private Note, by a faithful Hand, to his Relation here; entreating him not to think of ſuch a Voyage, and to diſcourage all his Friends from attempting it. Yet this, although it be a Truth well known, hath produced very little Effect, which is no Manner of Wonder; for as it is natural to a Man in a *Fever* to turn often, although without any Hope of Eaſe; or when he is purſued, to leap down a Precipice, to avoid an Enemy juſt at his Back; ſo, Men in the extremeſt Degree of Miſery and Want, will naturally fly to the firſt Appearance of Relief, let it be ever ſo vain or viſionary.

You may obſerve, that I have very ſuperficially touched the Subject I began with, and with the utmoſt Caution: For I know how criminal the leaſt Complaint hath been thought, however ſeaſonable, or juſt, or honeſtly intended; which hath forced me to offer up my daily Prayers, that it may never, at leaſt in my Time, be interpreted by *Inuendo's* as a falſe, ſcandalous, ſeditious and diſaffected Action, for a Man to roar under an acute Fit of the *Gout*; which, beſide the Loſs and the Danger, would be very inconvenient to one of my Age, ſo ſeverely afflicted with that Diſtemper.

I wiſh you good Succeſs; but I can promiſe you little, in an ungrateful Office, you have taken up, without the leaſt View, either to Reputation or Profit. Perhaps your Comfort is, that none but *Villains* and *Betrayers* of their Country, can be your *Enemies*. Upon which I have little to ſay, having not the Honour to be acquainted with many of that Sort; and therefore, as you eaſily may believe, am compelled to lead a very retired Life. I am, Sir, Your moſt Obedient, humble Servant,

A. NORTH.

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